

Early Protection for International Travel

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Each year more and more people are traveling internationally. Tourism, education, business, visiting friends and relatives, mission trips, responding to international disasters – all are reasons people are now taking trips to parts of the world seldom visited before.

As a traveler, your risk of becoming ill overseas depends on where you are going, how long you'll be staying there, what activities you have planned and how healthy you are before you leave.

At least four to six weeks before you are scheduled to leave, make an appointment with your healthcare provider to talk about your risks, and what immunizations or other steps may help protect you from illness.

Many vaccines take time to become effective and some must be given in a series over a period of days or weeks. If you will be traveling in less than four weeks, go ahead and visit with your healthcare provider. You may still be able to be vaccinated and receive information about how to prevent illness and stay healthy while you are traveling.

The three types of immunizations to consider when you are traveling are routine, recommended and required.

Routine immunizations are generally given after a child is born, and throughout his childhood and adolescence. These immunizations protect against diseases such as polio, measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus (DPT), hepatitis A, hepatitis B, chickenpox and other diseases. Childhood diseases such as measles rarely occur in the United States, but they are still common in many parts of the world.

There are also routine adult vaccinations, such as a tetanus diphtheria (Td) booster that should be received every 10 years. Adults should get these vaccinations in order to stay healthy while living in the United States.

Recommended vaccinations are suggested to protect travelers from illnesses that are present in other parts of the world, and to prevent people from bringing infectious diseases back into the United States.

Required immunizations are those that a country's government requires a traveler to present formal proof of vaccination in order to enter the country. Under International Health Regulations, governments may require visitors to show proof of yellow fever vaccination. There are also vaccination requirements for people traveling to Mecca for the annual Hajj.

The Springfield Greene County Health Department offers international travel vaccinations, including yellow fever at the Westside Public Health Center, located at 660 South Scenic Avenue in Springfield. For more information, call (417) 874-1220.

For information on recommended and required vaccinations for international travel, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention online at www.cdc.gov/travel.

Plan ahead to protect yourself while you travel – it all adds up to better health!